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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the level of agreement among four groups--students, parents, teachers, and administrators--in reference to a particular set of school objectives: the teaching of social studies in secondary schools. Twelve objectives for social studies teaching were given to the four groups for rank ordering on a five-point scale of importance. A comparison of the rankings shows that students tend to rate all objectives except environmental studies lower than the other groups and that students tend to take extreme stands (highest or lowest rating among the four groups) on objectives. In general, the study shows that students and teachers tend to disagree on their ratings and that administrators tend to align themselves with the view of teachers while parents generally agree with students. The picture is one of polarization between school personnel and those who benefit from the school program. This contrast may be a partial explanation for conflict between the school and those whom it seeks to serve, and may also provide a reason for parental discontent. Further research should be directed toward verification of these findings and to resolution of the differences among the four populations represented in the study. (Author/AV)

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A STUDY OF DIFFERENCES OF VIEWS OF STUDENTS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND ADMINISTRATORS ON SELECTED TEACHING OBJECTIVES

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Introduction

The school in the United States is a reflection of the total society; therefore the goals and objectives of the school should reflect the aims and thinking of those groups which have a vital interest in the schools. In the early 1960's, Lindsey (1961) reported on a National Commission of Teacher Education and Professional Standards' study which recommended that the lay public should come together with the profession to establish goals and purposes for the school. Many other writers have expressed ideas such as Gross and Ovard (1960) when these authors stated that it is important to have the approval of society in the development of goals for the school. However, there remains a lack of agreement among groups who have this vital interest in the school as to the school's goals and purposes.

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Because the school's program reflects the interest of many groups and because frequently there is disagreement among these groups as to what the goals of the school should be, this study was conducted to investigate the level of agreement that four groups (students, parents of students, teachers, and school administrators) would have in reference to a particular set of the school's objectives — the teaching of social studies in the secondary schools.

Procedure

From the students of North Clayton High School in Clayton County, Georgia, (metropolitan Atlanta) thirty tenth grade students, thirty eleventh grade students, and thirty twelfth grade students were randomly selected. Using the same procedure a different group of 150 students were selected whose parents were used as subjects. The school administrators used were the administrators of the four senior high schools, the eight junior high schools, and the central office staff of Clayton County. The social studies teachers of the four senior high schools were the teachers used for the study. These students, parents, teachers, and school administrators were given an instrument which consisted of twelve objectives for the teaching of social studies which had been abstracted from Clayton County Schools' stated objectives as well as objectives arrived at from the review of the literature concerning the teaching of social studies. The objectives were the following:

A. To enable the student to develop an understanding of various economic systems and the ability to compare them.

B. To develop in the student a coherent personal and civil code of behavior.

C. To acquire knowledge of the structure and function of local, state, and national government.

D. To enable the students to discover and comprehend significant facts, concepts, and generalizations from the different social studies.

E. To provide a systematic study of local needs, resources, and problems.

F. To develop an awareness of the environmental problems affecting today's world.

G. To develop in the student an understanding of and respect for other peoples, nations, religions, and cultural heritages.

H. To develop an appreciation of the accomplishments and cultural contributions of past civilizations.

I. To acquire an appreciation for the rights, privileges, duties, and responsibilities of American citizenship.

J. To acquire skills in reading, writing, speaking, and the ability to do research.

K. To develop critical thinking in dealing with information and propaganda.

L. To develop an appreciation for our cultural heritage and its many facets.

The subjects in the four groups used in the study were asked to rate each of the twelve objectives on the following five-point scale: very unimportant, unimportant, of medium importance, important, very important.

Analysis of Data

One hundred students, 120 parents, thirty-eight teachers, and thirty school administrators completed the evaluation instrument. For each of the four groups, the number of responses given in each level of the five-point scale was determined. In order to determine whether there were significant differences among the distributions of the four groups with respect to their ratings, the chi-square test was applied to the data on each objective. Table I gives the result of this test.

Insert Table I here

On eleven of the twelve objectives significant differences occured with the following pairwise differences being noted:

(1) Students and teachers differed on eight of the objectives.

(2) Students and administrators differed on six of the objectives.

(3) Students and parents differed on four of the objectives.

(4) Parents and teachers differed on five of the objectives.

(5) Parents and administrators differed on three of the objectives.

(6) Teachers and administrators differed on one objective.

These findings indicate that the most frequent occurence of the differences are found between students and teachers and the least frequent differences

Table I

Pairwise Chi-Square Values in
Relationship to Objectives

Objective	Pairwise Groups: Student/ Parent	Student/ Teacher	Student/ Administrator	Parent/ Teacher	Parent/ Administrator	Teacher/ Administrator
A	6.73	4.21	11.12*	2.11	3.67	4.50
B	16.35**	9.60*	11.88*	5.95	1.58	7.46
C	4.95	9.91*	8.13	3.44	5.79	5.25
D	3.38	14.17**	2.09	12.89*	0.38	5.67
E	2.22	8.45	2.80	9.37	3.79	1.86
F	6.35	22.25**	12.40*	10.62*	4.41	0.74
G	1.87	16.68**	9.21	14.36**	12.45**	23.38**
H	6.70	22.59**	9.16	10.35*	4.95	4.65
I	14.59**	8.96	10.49*	0.68	2.23	0.78
J	19.36**	7.24	3.67	6.43	21.85**	9.09
K	10.37*	26.34**	14.95**	10.46**	4.37	1.73
L	6.68	10.89*	14.86**	5.92	9.50*	1.18

* Significant at the .05 level.
** Significant at the .01 level.

between teachers and administrators.

When significant differences were found between groups for a particular objective, investigation was undertaken to determine in which direction the difference lay, i.e., which group saw the objective as being of greatest importance. Table II gives this information. The name of the group seeing the objective as more important is given in the table by the significant chi-square value.

Insert Table II here

From the data in Table II, the following implications can be drawn.

(1) On the eleven objectives where a significant difference was found among the pairwise comparisons, students differed from one or more of the other groups. In nine of the eleven, students took an extreme stand (highest or lowest rating among the four groups) and on eight of these nine, they rated the objective lower than did any other group.

(2) On five of the nine objectives where students took an extreme stand, teachers took the opposite extreme stand. Parents and students took opposite extreme stands on two objectives while administrators and students were at extremes on the remaining two.

Discussion of Findings

There are several interesting implications which are suggested by the data in this study. Essentially three conclusions are supported by significant chi-square values:

(1) Student tend to rate objectives lower than do parents, teachers, and administrators. The one exception was objective F, which dealt with environmental studies. Students rated this objective significantly higher than did each of the other groups. Although further research is needed to substantiate tenative reasons for this finding, a possible explanation is that crucial environmental problems have been more evident throughout the lives of

Table II

Chi-Square Values and Pairwise Direction
of Significant Differences

Pairwise Comparisons

Objective	Student/ Parent	Student/ Teacher	Student/ Administrator	Parent/ Teacher	Parent/ Administrator	Teacher/ Administrator
A			11.12* Admin.			
B	16.35** Parent	9.60* Teacher	11.88* Admin.			
C		9.91* Teacher				
D		14.17** Teacher		12.89* Teacher		
E						
F		22.25** Student	12.40* Student	10.62* Parent		
G		16.68** Teacher		14.36** Teacher	12.45** Parent	23.38** Teacher
H		22.59** Teacher		10.35* Teacher		
I	14.59** Parent		10.49* Admin.			
J	19.36** Parent				21.58** Parent	
K	10.37* Parent	26.34** Teacher	14.59** Admin.	10.46* Teacher		
L		10.89* Teacher	14.86** Admin.		9.50* Admin.	

* Significant at .05 level.
** Significant at .01 level.

this generation of students. Because of the visibility given these problems, students may be more ecologically minded.

(2) Students tend to take extreme stands (high or low ratings) on objectives, with teachers being the second most likely group to rate the objectives extremely. Parents and administrators tend to take "middle of the road" views and more rarely differ from other groups.

(3) Students and teachers, more often than other pair comparisons, tend to disagree on their ratings of objectives. The next greatest number of differences occurred between students and administrators. Parents tend to agree with students while administrators tend to agree with teachers. Pictorially the relationship may be conceptualized as shown in the following diagram:

Teachers - Administrators - - - - - - - - Parents - - - Students

Thus it appears that the two groups, students and teachers, who are in daily interaction in the school setting are in rather direct opposition with respect to their views of the school objectives stated in this study. Administrators, although not as much in opposition with the views of students, do tend to align themselves with the views of teachers. Parents, on the other hand, generally agree with students. The general picture then is one of polorization between school personnel and those who benefit from the school program. This contrast may be a partial explanation for conflict between the school and those whom it seeks to serve and may also tend to provide a reason for parental discontent. Certainly further research needs to direct itself toward the verification of these findings and to the resolution of the differences among the four populations represented in this study.

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